

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION,
PARTICIPATION, MISSION

Participants' Guide



Synod
2021
2023

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INTRODUCTION FROM BISHOP RICHARD

Our engagement in the “Synod Path” is a response to an invitation from the Holy Father, who invites us to prayer, discernment and openness to the Holy Spirit. He asks us to address particular questions, in order to assist him and the bishops who will gather for the Synod in their work for the good of the whole Church.

These questions are wide-ranging and significant for the life of the Universal Church and for our own Diocesan family, for they invite us to explore more deeply our own mission, our formation for that mission and the prayer that must always be the foundation for our lives of faith and witness to the Risen Christ.

We are at a significant moment in the life of the whole Church and the world. The experience of the Pandemic and the many challenges facing the global community are a spur to us to examine the best way forward for the effective proclamation of the Good News. This is a ‘golden moment’ for evangelization and the “Synod Path” will assist us in the Diocese in sharpening our focus on the essential work to which we have been called.

Accordingly, I invite you to take part in discussions in parishes and deaneries during the course of Advent this year, ideally through gatherings in each week of that season. I also invite our school and university communities and our prison communities to engage with the “Synod Path” in the ways most appropriate for them. Our communities of religious are making their contribution to the Synod too. There will also be an opportunity to respond via an internet link that will be published for the Diocese in the weeks ahead. The Holy Father has given us an invitation to take this “Synod Path” and it will be wonderful for us all to take this journey with – and for – the good of the Universal Church.

Please keep in prayer the work of the “Synod Path” in our Diocese and the Holy Father and those bishops who will be gathering in Rome in 2023.

With every Blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SYNOD

This guide has been designed to help you to journey, as a group or an individual, through the beginning of this Synodal process. But what is a Synod? And what is the process?

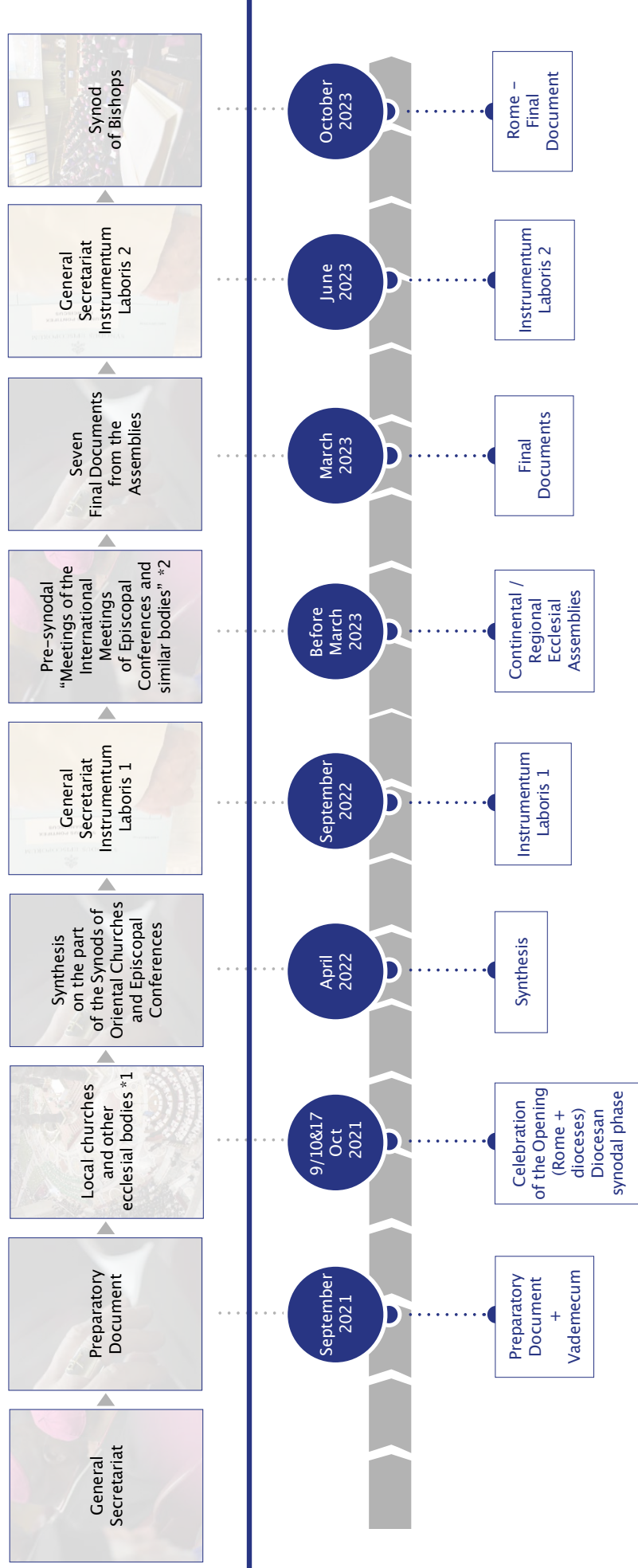
The word *synod* refers to a Church assembly brought together to answer some of the prominent questions that need addressing, in the light of the Gospel and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Being made of two Greek words that mean 'with' and 'path' we are called to journey together, accompanied by Jesus Christ, with an emphasis on really listening to each other. There have been a number of different synods on a variety of subjects, however in this one, the prominent questions being addressed are about **Communion, Participation and Mission.**

“ A synodal process is about to begin, a journey in which the whole Church is engaged around the theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” three pillars. Three phases are foreseen, which will take place between October 2021 and October 2023. This itinerary was thought out as dynamism of mutual listening. I want to stress this: a dynamism of mutual listening carried out at all levels of the Church, involving all the People of God. The Cardinal Vicar and the Auxiliary Bishops must listen to one another, the priests must listen to one another, the Religious must listen to one another, the laity must listen to one another and then, all inter-listening to one another; to listen to one another; to talk to one another and to listen to one another. It’s not about gathering opinions, no. This is not a survey, but about listening to the Holy Spirit...

Pope Francis, Address to the Faithful of Rome, 18th September 2021



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS



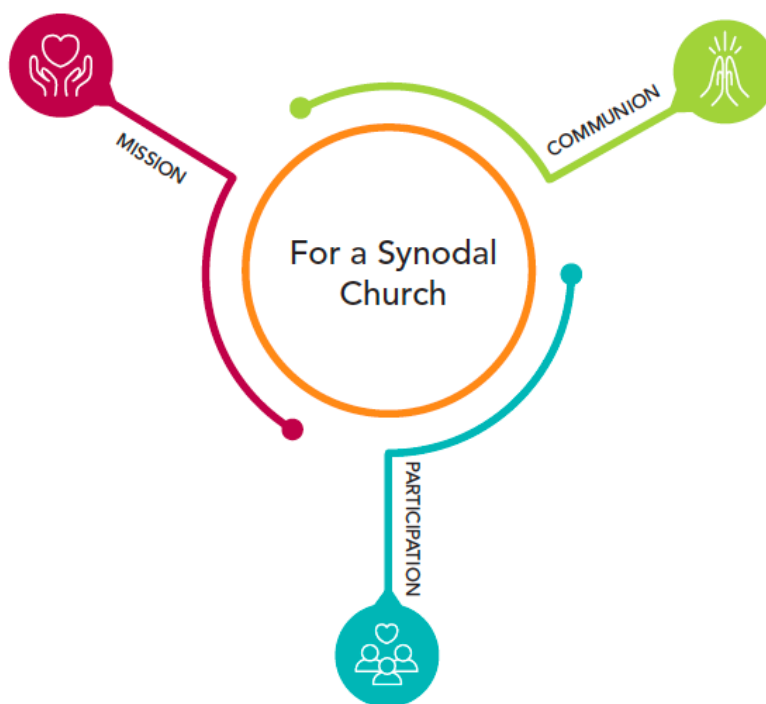
*1 Diocasteries, Consecrated Life (UISG-USC. UNIONS & FEDERATIONS), Associations of the Faithful, Institutions of Higher Education
*2 Africa (SECAM), Oceania (FCBCO), Asia (FABC), Middle East (CPCO), Europa (CEE), Latin America (CELAM), North America (USCCB+CCCC)



“

The purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission (PD, 32). Thus, the objective of this Synodal Process is not only a series of exercises that start and stop, but rather a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.

Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality



We are delighted that you have chosen to be a part of the synod process. We hope to encourage as many people as possible to explore the questions with others in a group, to enable dialogue, and encourage a deeper understanding of the topics involved. We understand this will not be possible for everyone and have designed this guide to be a useful aid to groups and those people considering the questions on their own.

Within this guide, you will find information about how to facilitate good group discussion and how to submit your responses.

This booklet has been devised around three sessions, enabling you to work through the synod questions in an organised way. We have included a prayer at the beginning of each session, ensuring that we invite God to be present in the process.

For more information about the Synod, please visit: www.abdiocese.org.uk/synod

INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Thank you for offering to facilitate a small group, a task that we hope you will find rewarding. Firstly, we want to share some **'top tips'** for small group discussion:

1. Ask open questions
2. Be encouraging (even if you don't agree)
3. Be yourself
4. Don't answer all the questions
5. Don't be afraid of silence
6. Rephrase the question if necessary

These tips have been taken from a video created to help Alpha small group leaders - we strongly recommend you watch it before your first meeting. You can find it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Te0JJQ3Tmgw>

We have created a series of **three group sessions** which should last a maximum of two hours if the timings suggested are followed. It might be tempting for the group to explore one particular topic - it is your responsibility to keep the sessions on track, ensuring that all questions receive equal attention, and everyone's voices are heard.

Each of the three sessions is structured around the synod questions set by the Vatican, which have been sent to every Diocese across the world.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) have provided useful guidance when responding to the questions:

Recall our experiences

Where do we find ourselves now? The world has come through a profound period with the covid-19 pandemic. The experiences of isolation, of sickness and death, of not being able to grieve as one would have contributed to the anxiety of life. On the other hand, there has been an outpouring of a generosity of spirit, of gratitude and care, of innovation and creativity. What strengths and weaknesses have emerged during this period in your lives and in your communities? What has been the experience of the touch of God in these times? What challenges and vulnerabilities have been exposed in our lives, both individually and as the church community, which need to be addressed?

Re-read those experiences in greater depth open to the inspiration of the Spirit

Look at these experiences in greater depth relating them to the Synod themes of communion, participation, and mission.

Gather the fruits to share

The third part of the process will be to gather the fruits of the discussion considering what needs to change to make the Church more missionary going forward. What have the last 2 years taught us about journeying together as Church?

We recommend that you use these three prompts to guide the discussion for each question, spending some of the allocated time for each question on recall, some on exploring these recollections more deeply, and finally drafting a group response to the question which brings into focus those areas where the church can grow in Communion, Participation and Mission.

A space has been provided under each question where the group responses should be recorded. You may wish to delegate this task to another group member to enable you to focus on the task of ensuring everyone has a fair chance to comment. As mentioned previously, for this process to be truly synodal, there must be clear dialogue, and accurate recording. If the group cannot agree on a certain point, it would be worth mentioning the disparity in your response. You will find information about how to submit your groups responses on **page 22**.

Thank you again for offering your time and talents to the synodal process. The undertaking may seem daunting initially, but we are sure you will enjoy a range of wonderful conversations, and get to know your fellow group members really well in the coming weeks.

SESSION ONE: COMMUNION

Group Facilitator

Welcome and introductions. Invite everyone to share something about themselves and why they have chosen to contribute to this process. Explain that this session the focus will be on Communion.

(5-10 minutes)

Pray Together

Lord, the Word who is Life. May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call, we may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Invite someone to proclaim the following passage of scripture

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

24:12-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[a] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over." he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table

with them, he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflect for a moment in silence

Group Facilitator:

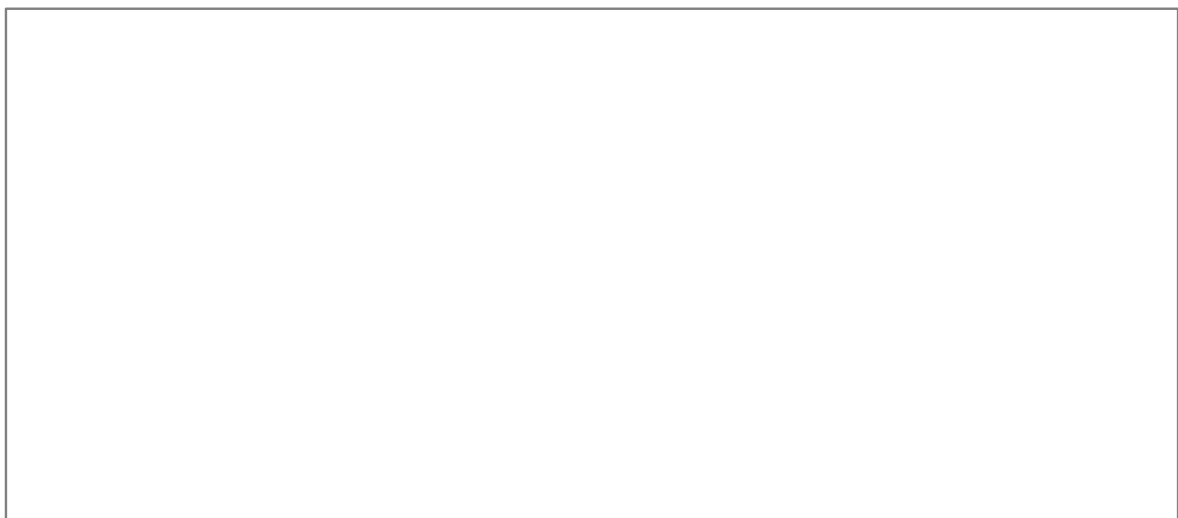
Lord, we thank you for bringing us together to reflect on the joy of your love and how we, as your people, can work together to share your joy and peace with others. We ask you to guide our conversation and all the conversations taking place across the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

(5-10 minutes)

Questions for Discussion

I. Journeying Companions

Think of those who form our parish community as we journey together. Which people or groups are on the edges of our community? Whom do we know who no longer walks with us, those who used to and now we don't see? How do we engage with those for whom the experience of Covid has prompted thoughts about faith? How do we welcome people?



(25-30 minutes)

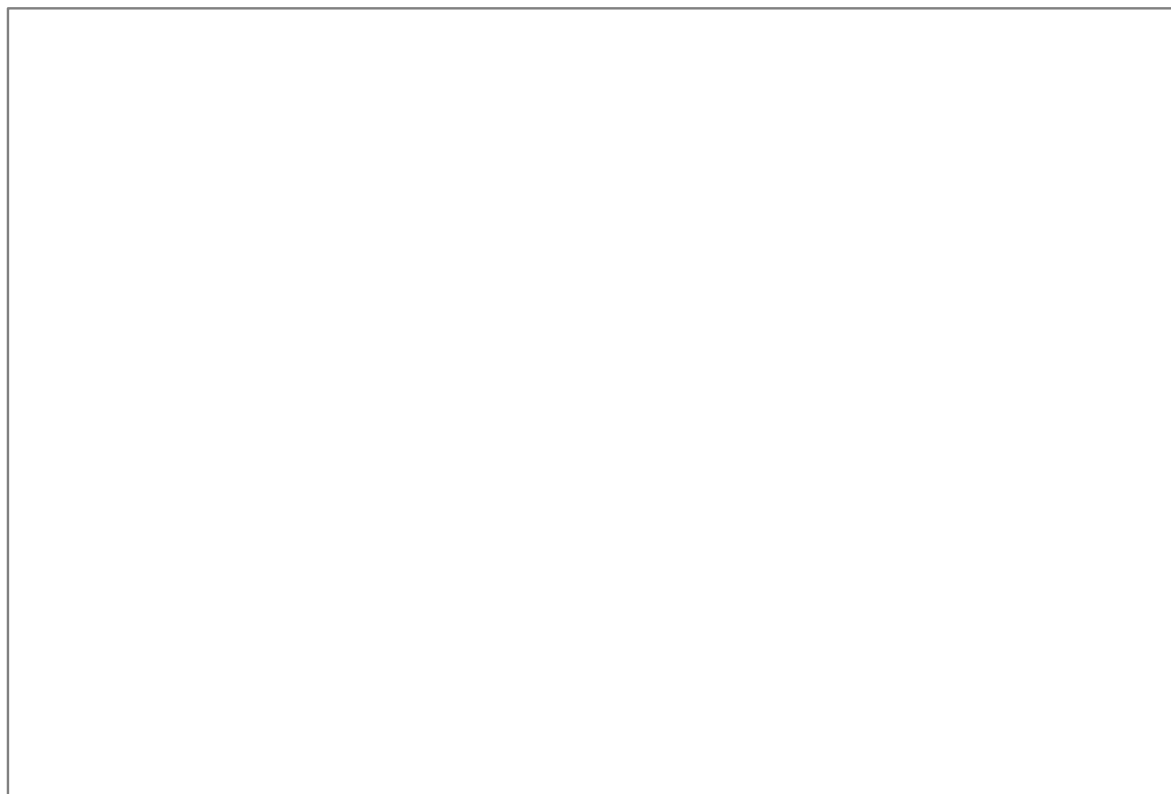
Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at accompanying people on their journey of faith'?
(Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

II. Listening

Do we listen to each other? How do we best do this – people to people, clergy to clergy, bishops to bishops? How do we deepen our listening, making it a “a listening of the heart” and not just of the issues and subjects at hand? How do we ensure that the Church responds to the culture and needs of society?



(25-30 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at heart to heart listening'? **(Please circle)**

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

III. Speaking Out

What is the communication like in our group/parish/diocese? Do we have the freedom to speak freely, openly, and respectfully? How am I living out my Christian life?

(25-30 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at communication'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

Group Facilitator

Thank everyone very much for all their contributions and invite them to a short time of intercessory prayer. You may use the following wording:

We have a few moments to bring everything we have discussed to God. We give thanks for all the good that our parish has done and continues to do, but we also pray for the strength and guidance that will allow us to grow as a community. I invite you now, either out loud or in the silence of your heart, to offer a prayer for any of the topics that we have discussed today.

Allow people to offer prayers

We gather all our prayers, both spoken and unspoken, and offer them to you Father, using the words our saviour gave us...

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen

St Philip Howard.... **Pray for us**

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom.... **Pray for us**

All Holy men and women... **Pray for us**

(5-10 minutes)

SESSION TWO: PARTICIPATION

Group Facilitator

Welcome participants back to the second session. Ensure any new members are particularly acknowledged and made to feel a part of the group. This session the focus is on participation.

(5 minutes)

Pray Together

Lord, the Word who is Life. May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call, we may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Invite someone to proclaim the following passage of scripture

A reading the Acts of the Apostles

2:1-8

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

The Word of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflect for a moment in silence

Group Facilitator:

Lord, we thank you for bringing us together to reflect on the joy of your love and how we, as your people, can work together to share your joy and peace with others. We ask you to guide our conversation and all the conversations taking place across the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

(5-10 minutes)

Questions for Discussion

IV. Celebrating

Do our celebrations in Church inspire a deeper encounter with the risen Lord? How does my prayer – both individually and in my community – enable my participation in the mission of the Church? Is the Eucharist the centre of mine, and my community's life? What flows from the Sunday (or daily) Eucharist, from our communities into the world? What do I give thanks to God for in prayer? What do I seek from him?

(20-25 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at celebrating the depth and breadth of our faith'?
(Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

V. Co-responsibility in the Mission

Do I understand the mission of the Church - in my own life, in the local church, and the universal church? How do our lives relate to the Great Commission of Jesus (*Matt 28:18-20**)? What formation do I need to be more committed to the mission of the Church? What impact is our local community making in the area – do we make a difference?

**And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

(20-25 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at empowering a sense of Mission'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

VI. Dialogue in Church and Society

How do we understand dialogue (respectful conversation) between Church and the wider Society? Do we see dialogue as a unique contribution that the Church can make to the world? How do we address the challenges that dialogue brings about? How do we begin to dialogue with others?

(20-25 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at Dialogue with the wider community'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

VII. Other Christian Denominations

What is our relationship with other Christian communities? Do we listen to each other as we journey on our pilgrim way? What enriches us from other traditions? What do we offer them from ours?

(20-25 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at building relationships with other denominations'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

Group Facilitator

Thank everyone very much for all their contributions and invite them to a short time of intercessory prayer. You may use the following wording:

We have a few moments to bring everything we have discussed to God. We give thanks for all the good that our parish has done and continues to do, but we also pray for the strength and guidance that will allow us to grow as a community. I invite you now, either out loud or in the silence of your heart, to offer a prayer for any of the topics that we have discussed today.

Allow people to offer prayers

We gather all our prayers, both spoken and unspoken, and offer them to you Father, using the words our saviour gave us...

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen

St Philip Howard.... **Pray for us**

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom.... **Pray for us**

All Holy men and women... **Pray for us**

(5-10 minutes)

SESSION THREE: MISSION

Group Facilitator

Welcome and introductions. Invite everyone to share something about how their perspectives or awareness of others may have changed since the process began. Explain that this session, the focus will be on mission.

(5-10 minutes)

Pray Together

Lord, the Word who is Life. May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call, we may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Invite someone to proclaim the following passage of scripture

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Reflect for a moment in silence

Group Facilitator:

Lord, we thank you for bringing us together to reflect on the joy of your love and how we, as your people, can work together to share your joy and peace with others. We ask you to guide our conversation and all the conversations taking place across the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

(5-10 minutes)

Questions for Discussion

VIII. Authority and Participation

How is authority exercised in our communities? How do we preach the Gospel? How does our parish community bring people closer to Christ? What groups or courses are available, what initiatives are in place? What are the fruits of this collaboration, and what are the obstacles and challenges?

(25-30 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at empowering participation'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

IX. Discerning and Deciding

How do we discern together the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us? Is there freedom to exercise my particular gifts in the Church, and participate in this common work of discernment and decision making? Is my parish community accountable and transparent in decision making? What can help improve this? Do I support the Bishops and the Priests in arriving at their decisions?

(25-30 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at discerning and deciding'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

X. Forming ourselves in Synodality

What additional formation do I need to be a missionary disciple? Is the local community effective in catechising and passing on the faith? What tools are necessary for the Church to be truly synodal, listening and journeying together? How do we continue the listening and dialogue beyond this process so that the Church have a "lived synodality" as the Holy Father asks?

(25-30 minutes)

Based on your groups experience and on a scale of 1-5, do you agree/disagree with this statement:

'The Church is good at being synodal'? (Please circle)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

Group Facilitator

Thank everyone very much for all their contributions and invite them to a short time of intercessory prayer. You may use the following wording:

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St Philip Howard... **Pray for us**

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom.... **Pray for us**

All Holy men and women... **Pray for us**

(5-10 minutes)

SUBMITTING YOUR RESPONSES

Thank you for taking the time to prayerfully consider and submit the questions sent to us from the Holy Father in Rome.

Pope Francis is inviting us to take the synodal journey together. Bishops will play a key role in the synodal process, listening to the people of God in their particular Church and, under the power of the Holy Spirit, hearing and discerning what is being said of that Church.

We are hoping as many people as possible will share their responses using our online form. To do this please visit **Survey Monkey** using the following link:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PTZKV3L

If you are unable to access the internet, please post your completed booklet to:

**Synod Responses,
The Formation Team,
Bishop's House,
The Upper Drive,
Hove BN3 6NB**

The deadline for online and postal submissions is **Friday 4 February 2022**.

To ensure that the process is fully synodal, Bishop Richard will deliver an online webinar prior to sending our submission to the Bishops' Conference, on Wednesday 9 March 2022. Further details of the webinar will be available on the diocesan Synod webpage: <https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/synod> in the coming weeks.

Thank you for taking part in the Synod and may the Lord bless the fruits of our conversations.

PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD

The Synod Office in Rome has adapted the prayer *Adsumus* which was used at the beginning of every session of the Second Vatican Council to invoke the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to their work. This invocation calls on the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds of those participating and to “see” where the action of the Spirit is, so that all may be aware of the fruits of that action.

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. Amen.*

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

www.abdiocese.org.uk

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